

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02302 220908Z

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2302

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PO

SUBJ: PORTUGUESE LABOR SCENE PRIOR TO CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
ELECTIONS

REFS: (A) STOCKHOLM 1845 (B) HELSINKI 847 (C) COPENHAGEN 1103

SUMMARY: THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS OF APRIL 25
WILL PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT INDICATION OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTHS
OF THE COMMUNIST, THE SOCIALIST, AND THE FAR-LEFT FRINGE PARTIES
IN THE PORTUGUESE LABOR MOVEMENT. THE SOCIALISTS REPRESENT
THE ONLY VIABLE LONG-RUN ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUED PCP DOMINANCE
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PAGE 02 LISBON 02302 220908Z

IN INTERSINDICAL, THE LABOR CONFEDERATION. A STRONG SOCIALIST

SHOWING IN THE ELECTIONS WOULD GIVE THEM IMPETUS IN FORTH-COMING UNION ELECTIONS. THE SCANDINAVIANS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN MOST SUCCESSFUL OF ALL NON-COMMUNIST LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN ESTABLISHING CONTACTS WITH PORTUGUESE LABOR. STRENGTHENING OF THESE CONTACTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED, BUT ASSISTANCE GIVEN THROUGH INTERSINDICAL IS LIKELY TO BE PERVERTED TO PCP OBJECTIVES. END SUMMARY.

1. CURRENT PORTUGUESE LABOR SCENE:

PORTUGUESE LABOR SCENE, LIKE THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK, WILL BE CLEARER AFTER THE APRIL 25 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION. EVEN THOUGH THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) HAS ALREADY OBTAINED THE AGREEMENT OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, THE ELECTIONS SHOULD PROVIDE THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT INDICATION OF THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF PORTUGUESE ELECTORATE--AND BY INTERPRETATION, OF THE LABOR FORCE IN THE PAST HALF-CENTURY.

2. IT IS APPARENT THAT THE EXISTING LABOR CONFEDERATION, INTER-SINDICAL, IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS THE RECOGNIZED REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATION FOR THE PORTUGUESE LABOR MOVEMENT. THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) DOMINATES INTERSINDICAL'S LEADERSHIP, LARGELY BECAUSE PARTY SUPPORTERS RAPIDLY SEIZED CONTROL OF THE MAJOR UNIONS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION, BUT THE EXTENT OF PCP SUPPORT IN RANK AND FILE REMAINS TO BE TESTED.

3. THE PROPOSED DECREE LAW PERMITTING ONLY A SINGLE LABOR CONFEDERATION (I.E., INTERSINDICAL) IS STILL AWAITING PRESIDENTIAL PROMULGATION ALTHOUGH IT HAS COMPLETED ALL REQUIRED PROCEDURAL STEPS. THE LAW WILL REQUIRE INTERNAL UNION ELECTIONS. THE CURRENT PCP DOMINANCE OF INTERSINDICAL COULD BE CHALLENGED THROUGH THESE UNION ELECTIONS BY THE SOCIALISTS, WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE WIDESPREAD BUT MOSTLY LATENT SUPPORT AMONG THE WORKERS, AND BY THE HANDFUL OF SMALL, VOCAL, REVOLUTIONARY MAOIST/TROTSKITE GROUPS WHICH ARE ATTEMPTING TO OUTFLANK THE PCP FROM THE LEFT. AT PRESENT WE BELIEVE THAT THE PCP ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL OF INTERSINDICAL IS SUCH THAT ANY CHALLENGE WOULD EASILY BE PUT DOWN, BUT A STRONG SOCIALIST PARTY SHOWING IN THE CONSTITUENT ELECTIONS WOULD GIVE GREAT IMPETUS TO SOCIALIST SLATES IN FUTURE UNION ELECTIONS.

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PAGE 03 LISBON 02302 220908Z

4. POSSIBILITIES FOR US ACTION:

THERE IS LITTLE WHICH THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT CAN DO DIRECTLY AT THIS TIME TO CONSTRUCTIVELY INFLUENCE THE TREND OF EVENTS IN PORTUGUESE LABOR. THERE IS A SOMEWHAT BETTER PROSPECT FOR USG INITIATIVES, E.G., THE PROPOSED LEADER GRANT TO THE MINISTER OF LABOR. EMBASSY EXPECTS THAT SUCH TRAVEL AND EXCHANGES ON THE TECHNICAL LEVEL COULD DEMONSTRATE THAT US DOES

HAVE EXPERTISE PERTINENT TO PORTUGUESE SITUATION AND MIGHT FACILITATE FUTURE UNOFFICIAL CONTACTS--TO THE EXTENT THAT THESE MAY BE FEASIBLE AT ALL.

5. THE MOST INFLUENTIAL NON-COMMUNIST CONTACTS WITH PORTUGUESE LABOR TO DATE HAVE BEEN THE VARIOUS EXCHANGES WITH THE SCANDINAVIANS. THE LOCALLY RESIDENT ICFTU REPRESENTATIVE IS NEUTRALIZED BY PUBLICITY IDENTIFYING HIM AS REPRESENTING AN ESSENTIALLY ANTAGONISTIC ORGANIZATION. THE WORLD CONGRESS OF LABOR AND ITS RELATED GROUP, BASE-FUT, HAS NOT FOUND A SIGNIFICANT LABOR FOLLOWING. THE EFFORTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS THUS FAR HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTING.

6. THE SITUATION DESCRIBED ABOVE UNDERLINES THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING SCANDINAVIAN LINKS WITH THE PORTUGUESE LABOR MOVEMENT. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS SHOULD INDICATE WHETHER THE SOCIALIST PARTY DOES REPRESENT, AS THE EMBASSY BELIEVES, THE ONLY VIABLE LONG-RANGE ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUED PCP CONTROL OF INTERSINDICAL.

7. INTERSINDICAL'S LEADERSHIP HAS ONLY LIMITED AND ONE-SIDED EXPOSURE IN INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS. SOME OF THESE LEADERS MAY BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE AND CONTACTS WITH FREE UNIONS, PARTICULARLY THE SCANDINAVIANS. HOWEVER, LABOR ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDERING WORKING WITH PORTUGUESE LABOR SHOULD BE AWARE OF LIKELIHOOD THAT, IF NOT CAREFULLY SUPERVISED, ANY ASSISTANCE GIVEN THROUGH THE INTERSINDICAL STRUCTURE WILL BE PERVERTED TO SUPPORT PCP OBJECTIVES.

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